INDIA

A Record and Review of Indian Affairs

PUBLISHED MONTHLY

EDITED BY GORDON HEWART.

ENTERED AT STATIONERS' HALL.] [OFFICES: 84 AND 85, PALACE CHAMBERS, LONDON, S.W.

VOL. VIII. Parliamentary Report No. 2. MARCH, 1897.

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This Supplement consists of a FULL Report, specially drawn up for "India," of the Debates on Indian subjects in both Houses of Parliament, and questions put on such subjects and the answers given to them, arranged chronologically, from February 1st to February 23rd.

Imperial Parliament.

February 1st.

HOUSE OF LORDS.

THE FAMINE IN INDIA.

Lord KINNAIRD rose to ask her Majesty's Government what were the number of relief camps at present established in the famine districts in India, and at what distance they were situated apart; whether the Government could state how often each relief camp was visited by a British official or other European member of committee; whether they could furnish statistics showing the increase of mortality in the famine districts during the past few months; whether the Indian Government were taking any measures to store grain in remote districts more than 30 miles from a railway or large navigable river; whether the Government still declined to store and sell grain, and resolved to leave the safety of such remote tracts to the action of private individuals; whether such a policy of abstention was not essayed both in Orissa in 1886 and in Southern India in 1877; and whether the result was not in both cases that prices mounted to five and, in some cases, ten times their ordinary figure, followed by uncontrollable calamity and hundreds and thousands of deaths? He said that he wished to refer shortly to the experience gained in past famines, especially in the famine of 1877. In that year it appeared "that prices were quoted week after week at five and six times and even eight times those ordinarily current, yet the same cold meaningless formulas were week after week published: 'supply sufficient,' 'supply middling,' 'supply fair,' 'supply plentiful,' 'supply enough.' As if this could by any possibility be the case contemporaneously with a continuation of such prices. In only one district, Kaladgi, was it occasionally hinted that the supply was defective. Early in January, 1877, the prices there were quadrupled." Yet no steps were taken by the Government to import food. "The month of August found the Viceroy officially announcing that the price of food averaged five times, in many parts eight times, that of ordinary years; it was admitted that success had not attended the efforts to save life. Success indeed had become impossible in the face of that one cardinal error of non-importation. The Madras Relief Committee was then telegraphing to the Lord Mayor, 'Middle classes exhausted, owing to famine prices,' and even in towns and centres of civilisation, those below the middle classes were dying in thousands. In the one district of Salem half-a-million persons were missing, the greater majority of whom had perished from starvation. In the more distressed parts of Madras it was officially admitted that probably about 20 per cent. of the population had disappeared, and in those of Bombay about 12 per cent. It was at the close of the famine officially recorded that in 95 distressed taluks, 10 in Bombay, and 15 in Madras, 855,000 persons out of a population of less than five millions were missing." These records showed that the questions standing in his name on the Paper, referred to a subject which called for immediate attention. In paragraph 42 of the Famine Code, it was laid down that: "Only in very exceptional cases, and in the last resort, will Government take direct action to import grain, and Government will not interfere with private trade, so long as that trade is able and willing to place food at reasonable prices, within the reach of the distressed people. If compelled to interfere because grain is not in, or is withheld from a local market, Government will do so only until the ordinary course of trade is restored." It seemed that Government did not contemplate taking any steps merely on the ground of high prices. Thus, if again, as in 1887, prices should rise to five or six times that of a good year, and should be impossible for the great majority, and at the same time, as in 1877, supplies should be officially returned as "sufficient, plentiful, fair," no action would be taken. Nor did it seem that Government would take action in any case save in "very exceptional cases and in the last resort." If Government was to wait for that stage, and only then to set about making purchases in distant lands, how were the people to subsist during the month or six weeks that would certainly elapse between the inception of Government action, and the arrival of the grain in those parts? Those parts would always be the ones most difficult of access, to which transport would take longest. It was only by being already prepared, by having stores available in remote parts to be drawn upon at once on the occurrence of such a condition of things, that a disaster can be averted. And high prices should be an essential element in deciding Government when to open its stores. If it were when importing to declare that its price would be 18 lbs. per rupee (a price never yet exceeded for long without a grievous calamity) and that it would never move from that, private trade would have a degree of security and certainty concerning its operation which now with "corners" and "rigging" it had not. That merchants admitted; but they were terrified at the idea of Government changing its rate from time to time—a fatal policy. Government had, in accordance with the policy thus laid down in its Famine Code, refrained from importation and sale. It had, at the same time, assembled huge masses of people on to its works—in some cases about 30,000 on a work of no very great extent. The only provision the Code made for securing that the money wage paid these workers could procure grain was this: "One or more contractors may be appointed for each circle by the collector." But this contractor was not a salaried servant, and he, himself a local grain dealer, could surrender at a moment's notice. There was nothing to prevent him from breaking his contract, and leaving the labourers one morning with nothing to eat. There was nothing to prevent him from doing this at any moment in case of a combination among dealers. Of course

he might be proceeded against in the Civil Courts, but of what avail would litigation of that sort be in saving life? Two mornings ago, Reuter's agent reported from Bijafont, a work with 5,000 persons on it where no provisions were supplied, the labourers having to come into Bijafont, six miles, to effect the necessary purchases. And so far, we were only at the beginning of the difficulties. The Secretary of State in his despatch of 15th January, 1897, recognised that, in October last, in 74 districts the cheapest kinds of grain were dearer than 20 lbs. per rupee. He anticipated that distress would increase till April, possibly to the end of May, and would not subside till August or September. He approved the decision of the Indian Government "to abstain from any interference with the operations of the grain trade," and added, "its operations, so long as they are effective, must not be subjected to competition by Government agency." No one would for a moment suggest anything else than what was contained in this last sentence; but it was where, by absence of supplies or by impossible prices, private trade showed that its operations were not effective, that Government must sell if a whole population was not either to starve or to be brought on to the relief works, and the calamity was to be checked from becoming uncontrolable. If that was so, it followed necessarily, that Government must be already prepared with its stores on the spot, which stores it must have already imported from distant lands. As yet, no steps had been taken in that direction. The supplies of these distant lands had apparently not yet been drawn on for the wants of India. "I don't gather that supplies of food are yet coming into the distressed districts from Burma, Madras, or Siam," wrote the Secretary of State on the 15th January, 1897. The reason was natural enough. Prices in those parts had already, owing to demands which India was ordinarily wont to supply, risen much; they left but a narrow margin for the private traders' profit after damage and freight had been paid; and then there were the further risks of the grain not proving popular (a risk which the intimate knowledge of Government officials would go far to obviate), of the means of carriage into remote parts, and a hundred other difficulties which it required a very large possible profit to encourage a private trader to face. The results so far of the present policy on this point had been that, in accordance with the prophecy of the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Provinces, on the 30th September, prices had been "driven up altogether out of the reach of large numbers of the poorer rayats (cultivators with holdings of their own), agricultural labourers, artisans, and others." They had been thrown on the hands of the Government for relief, others would gradually be swept into the spreading vortex. On the 23rd November he reported "prices phenomenally high, and prices of coarsest and best food grains approximating as they do in famines." Prices had in many parts of the afflicted districts for three months not been more favourable than 16 and 17 lbs. per rupee. These presumably were the official prices of the grain merchants; in the remote parts they would, if that were so, be much higher. The numbers on relief had risen to two millions, showing thus early great and widespread exhaustion among classes who should have stood out much longer. On the 28th October, 1896, the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces wrote: "With exhausted stocks, deficient harvests, and the pressure of a load of debt, which had steadily grown during the succession of unfavourable years, it is not surprising that the feeling of the agricultural population should be one of great despondency, almost of despair, and that the position of the landless classes should cause the gravest anxiety." From Behar, in October, combinations of grain dealers were reported —they withheld supplies for some days. The Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, in November, reported combinations of grain dealers and rising prices. The Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, on November 18th, sent a long report to the Government of India, dealing more especially with the condition of Behar. Contrasting it with the Behar of 1874, when there was the famine, he pointed out the enormous spread of railways throughout the province of Behar in the last 20 years (589 miles as against 147), and added: "But though there are many grounds for confidence which did not exist in 1873-74, the fact cannot be overlooked that there are also fresh grounds for anxiety. Prices of food grains have steadily risen during the past two years, and are now higher than they ever have been before; this fact, coupled with the facts already mentioned, that wages have not risen proportionally to prices; that the purchasing power of the poorer classes has, therefore, been steadily diminishing, and is now less than ever it was; that whereas in former years of scarcity prices were kept down by importation from the North-Western Provinces and lower Bengal, in the present year supplies from these sources cannot be confidently relied upon—are all circumstances that give fresh cause for anxiety, which had no existence in 1873-74." The Lieut-Governor proceeded to remark that it was estimated that there was a deficit of 550,000 tons of grain in Behar for the year's provision, and while hoping that this estimate might prove exaggerated, he added:—"If private trade does not step in in time to supply the deficit, there may be at any time a panic and a sudden rise in prices. The question whether private trade will do all that is required is in reality the *crux* of the situation." He pointed out that to relieve the situation the importations must come from beyond the sea (this, two months later, the Secretary of State said, had not been done)—"Because the high prices in Eastern Bengal, and the indications of distress already existing in districts that were always considered free from risks of scarcity show that little reliance can be placed on supplies from within the province of Bengal." He laid great stress on the loophole in the Famine Commissioners' Report:—"A resolution to rely on the ordinary operations of trade to meet the wants of the country unquestionably rests, not only on the activity of traders, but also on the probability of the requisite supplies of food being forthcoming at the critical time." "They admitted," he added, "that there may be cases in which Government interference is admissible, such as for the purpose of providing food required for payment of wages on relief works, and distribution of gratuitous relief stimulating trade when it is sluggish or fails to act, or grain dealers combine and refuse to sell." The conclusion he arrived at was—"That there is ground for confidence that the food wants of the provinces will be met by private trade." These hopes he built on anticipated importations from Burma, importations which, two months later, the Secretary of State pointed out, had not taken place. He adds:—"It is necessary to repeat that, in view of the unparalleled highness of prices and of extent of the area over which there has been shortness of crops throughout India, the situation as regards the food supply is not free, even in Bengal, from elements of doubt and anxiety." These doubts should now have become intensified. It appeared that in parts of three of the Behar districts, Champaran, Mozuffirput and Darbhanga, communications were still defective. These were generally large exporting districts, and were therefore without any native machinery for import. Exports arranged for beforehand in all probability were in November still going forward there, though it was in these parts the failure had been greatest, and prices were between 15 lbs. and 18 lbs. per rupee. The planters of Mozuffirput were arranging for importing 1,500 tons of rice from Rangoon for sale on easy terms to their villagers. The Mahárájá of Darbhanga was similarly arranging for 5,000 tons for sale on favourable terms to his tenants; but inasmuch as this was being bought locally, it might have had the undesirable effect of shortening supplies in the markets and raising prices. These gentlemen, so intimately acquainted with the wants of the peasantry on their estates, acted thus so far back as November, and they could only have done so from the knowledge that private trade was not, and would not, place grain in the market at possible prices. They knew, as all experience showed, that to store and sell grain to the peasantry at possible prices was the best, and indeed only, way of staving off an almost universal destitution. The Government, who in India was more emphatically than in any other country the one great landlord, still declined to move in this direction. These gentlemen were no more grain dealers than the Government was; but close acquaintance with the necessities of the case compelled them to turn to. Of one district—Khubua, in Lower Bengal—the Lieutenant-Governor, on the 20th November, reported that he had just heard from the Commissioner that relief must be started in one subdivision, that the price of rice in the bazaars was 12 to 14 lbs. per rupee, and that these were merely fancy prices as the grain was not forthcoming in any quantities even at that price: "If the state of things is so bad in Khubua, with its abundant waterways and its proximity to Calcutta, it is only probable that the condition of things in more distant places may be equally bad." As to the chance of private trade doing all that was required, which was to keep prices down, even in the most out-of-the-way parts, to a rate not dearer than 18 lbs.

of common food per rupee, which all experience showed must not be passed, and cannot long be passed, without an uncontrollable calamity, the following are not unimportant considerations. Wheat and rice were probably the main grains in question—rice in the more eastern and southern of the affected districts, wheat in those more to the north-west. The Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, with the best information before him, wrote to the Government of India on the 18th November as follows: "Cargoes of Californian wheat of 4,000 to 5,000 each can be landed in Calcutta at Rs. 5 to Rs. 5.1 per maund. Offers for such cargoes to arrive in two months or more are not higher than Rs. 4.10 to Rs. 4.11, a fact which indicates, in the opinion of merchants, the price of wheat will not in Calcutta rise beyond Rs. 4.10 to 4 11 within the next two months." But these were wholesale and not retail prices; the retail price in Calcutta, to admit of any profit at that time, would be quite Rs. 5 per maund, or 16 lbs. per rupee. It appeared from the above that Californian wheat could not be imported at a less cost than Rs. 5 per maund at the seaboard, which would mean quite Rs. 5.8 before reaching the railway stations in the North-West, and Rs. 6 before penetrating into the remote parts. Then a profit had to be made by the retail vendor, and his risks had to be covered, so that Rs. 6½ was probably the price at which private trade could afford to import and retail wheat in the interior of the North-Western Provinces. This would mean about 12 lbs. per rupee. As to rice, the same authority on the same date wrote that the new coarse Baracate rice (which was not much in favour) could be obtained at Rangoon (for delivery in two months or later) at Rs. 3.8 per maund, or Rs. 4.8 at Calcutta This would mean quite Rs. 5 at any central railway station in Behar, and quite Rs. 6 before the retail vendor in remote parts could hope to secure a profit. That would be about 13½ lbs. per rupee. Thus, so far as he could see, there was no chance, and since November there has been no chance, of private trade being able to import and retail the grain in common use at such a price as was possible for the people, or as could possibly hope to stave off the spread of a calamity which threatened to become almost universal. In this connexion, too, it must be remembered that, as Sir Lepel Griffin pointed out the other day in a letter to the *Times*, the savings of the cultivators of India were being largely invested in the silver ornaments of their women. These formed their savings bank. Hitherto, in all famine times, these had been turned into rupees for the purchase of grain. The price they had fetched in rupees had been the value of the silver. Now things were different. The Government, by closing the mints, had put the rupee 25 per cent. above the value of the silver it contained, and the cultivator now, in order to get four rupees, would have to sell the silver of five. His means of purchasing were thus materially reduced, and the 18 lb. price of which he had spoken as one which previous experience showed could not be materially passed, became now, owing to the above circumstance, all the more emphatically so. The Secretary of State, in his despatch of January 15th to the Viceroy, stated: "I do not gather that supplies of food are yet coming from Burma, Madras, or Siam;" but adds: "I question if Indian prices are as yet high enough to attract wheat or corn maize from the West." Thus, it would seem certain that private trade would not in the present distress move to keep materially by foreign importation of grain except prices for common grain in the interior rose to about 12 or 13 lbs. per rupee. But this was a price which must at all hazards be prevented. It could only be prevented at a loss to the importers; and Government was alone the importer who could afford the loss, and who was bound to incur it.

The EARL OF ONSLOW said he was sorry that he could not give the noble lord any information as to the exact number of relief camps in existence. He could say, however, that each relief work was under a responsible officer, who visited that relief work constantly. The numbers engaged on the relief works varied from 100 or 200 to 28,000 or 30,000, and some of those works were under the charge of the local zemindars, who did most excellent service in a recent famine. The Government had certain statistics as to the mortality of the districts of Jabalpur, and these showed that there was a very large mortality in the early months of the year due mainly, if not entirely, to cholera or fever, and that mortality had been steadily increasing. They had desired the Government of India to supply that information, shortly and roughly as it must necessarily be, from time to time, whenever there was an increase of mortality above the normal. As to measures for the storage of grain, it was perfectly true that it was the policy of the Government for a short time to import themselves grain into the distressed districts, but the result of that was found to be very unsatisfactory. Very shortly afterwards—in the famine of 1876, towards the close of the year—the Government ceased to import grain into the districts, and the consequence was that as soon as Government competition had disappeared the private traders were encouraged to take up and continue their operations, and no less than 4,000 cwt. a day were poured into the district until the railways were carrying as much as it was possible for them to carry. With the experience which the Government of India had of several famines they had determined to lay down the principle that they would not interfere with private trade so long as private trade was able to supply the necessities of the people. Exceptional cases were recorded in the Blue-book in which it was the duty of the Government, and one which they recognised, to intervene. They recognised that food must be provided at relief works, that trade must be stimulated where it was sluggish by guaranteeing prices or advancing money to traders, and where there was a combination among traders not to sell at normal prices the Government might then intervene, but except in these exceptional cases the Government of India were satisfied that the requirements of the situation could be met, as far as could be seen in the immediate future, by the action of private traders. The noble lord was, no doubt, aware that the Lieutenant-Governors in the different provinces had full power to act in those exceptional cases whenever they arose within their districts. The noble lord had stated that the present famine was of exceptional severity, and that it had spread over a wider area than any previous famine. It was perfectly true, at any rate so far as the extent of the area was concerned; but he thought the noble lord would agree that upon no former occasion had the Government of India been in so favourable a position, owing to the wise foresight of those who laid down the Famine Code, for dealing with so widespread a calamity. He assured the noble lord that, although a new condition of affairs had arisen, inasmuch as the stocks of grain in India were likely to be drawn upon to the fullest possible extent, and it was possible that it might be necessary to import grain from outside, the Secretary of State and the Government of India were giving the most careful attention to the whole subject, and the remarks of the noble lord would not be lost sight of. The Government of India would be the last persons to desire that their lordships should refrain from criticism of their action, but he expressed a hope that in this unexampled and double calamity which had fallen on India the Viceroy and his advisers might have the support of their lordships on both sides of the House. He was satisfied that if they were successful in combating this great evil they would establish a greater claim even than the remembrance of our military prowess or naval supremacy on the loyalty and affection of the people of India. (Hear, hear.)

The EARL OF NORTHBROOK: I am sure my noble friend who introduced this subject was quite justified in doing so, because there can be no doubt of the magnitude of the calamity which affects our Indian Empire, and of the great difficulties with which the Government of India has to contend in meeting it. The question whether it is desirable or otherwise for the Government to interfere with trade for the purchase and storage of grain in affected parts of the country, is perhaps one of the most difficult administrative questions with which any Government has to deal. Speaking generally, the more trade is left untrammelled the greater the probability of meeting the demand for grain, or any other article in any country, and that general principle undoubtedly applies to India. The greater extent of railways, which now exists, makes it far more easy for trade to meet the demand in different parts of India than was the case 23 years ago. At that time it was necessary to import considerable supplies of rice into the northern parts of Bengal. That was done by the Government of the day because, from the best information they could obtain, there was no probability whatever of trade dealing with the difficulty, and the result was satisfactory. It did not interfere with trade in other parts of the country, and the people were supplied with food. But what I wish to say on the present occasion is that I conceive this to be a matter which may be confidently and safely left to the discretion of the Government of India. (Hear, hear.) They have a great, an almost overwhelming, responsibility placed upon their shoulders. It seems to me, having read the Blue-book, that

they have taken every precaution in their power to obtain the fullest information as to the food supplies, and that they are prepared to act with promptitude supposing it becomes necessary to take steps by the Government for the importation of food supplies into any part of the country. I happen to be personally acquainted with the Lieutenant-Governors of Bengal, of the North-West Provinces, and of the Punjab, three districts in which the greatest distress is anticipated, and I can assure your lordships that no three officers in the service of the Crown can be better able to cope with a difficulty of this or of any other description, and I have the most complete confidence that they will act with energy and promptitude. I desire also to express my opinion, as far as I am able to judge, that the full confidence of the people of this country may be placed in Lord Elgin and in those who are assisting him, and I do not think that any action of your lordships is required by the circumstances of the case, or is in any respect desirable. (Cheers.)

Lord WENLOCK said he had only lately returned from a part of India where, he was thankful to say, there was at present very slight distress, yet the noble lord who introduced the subject had raised a question on which he was able to throw a little light. In 1891-92, in the Presidency of Madras, they were threatened with a very serious state of affairs, arising from great scarcity of water, and naturally at that time the Government's attention was drawn most particularly to the question of the supply of grain to the impoverished districts. From all quarters the Government was constantly asked to take up the question itself and deal with it; and the conclusion it arrived at was that any interference with the food trade would be more likely to work harm than good. He often came across cases where "rings" or "corners" were made by the grain merchants, not only to keep up the price of grain, but to hold it back till prices reached a much higher figure, and on every occasion it was found that some private individual, or perhaps a syndicate of philanthropic and charitable persons, merely by sending up a truck or two of grain, was able at once to restore the balance of prices and to keep them steady throughout the whole country. That was by far the soundest course that could be adhered to. He was convinced the Governments of the various provinces were watching those points most narrowly, and if at any time it was found that private trade was not able to meet the requirements of the case, then and then only would the Government step in and do the work which the noble lord wished them to do at once. He mentioned these facts because his experience was a recent one.

The EARL OF KIMBERLEY: I cannot speak at all with the experience of my noble friend Lord Northbrook, or that of the noble lord who has been Governor of Madras; but I merely wish to echo the feeling which Lord Northbrook has expressed—that in this great calamity we must trust to the Government of India to take the necessary measures. (Cheers.) All those who have been connected with the administration of Indian affairs must be aware that there is no subject which has received more close and continuous attention than that dealing with famine, and never has the Government of India been so well prepared as it now is to cope with a calamity of this kind. Not only has a most elaborate code, founded upon experience of former famines, been drawn up, but, what is most material, in the course of the long period during which there has been no serious famine in India, there has been created a number of railways, generally known as famine lines, and by these means, to a great extent, the very serious difficulties which formerly existed in the way of carrying food to the people, because of there being no means of transport, have been overcome. I am sanguine that everything will be done that can possibly be done, although from the very magnitude of the calamity it will be impossible to prevent much privation and terrible suffering. I greatly lament that so great a calamity should be accompanied also with a threatened extension of the bubonic plague which has broken out in Bombay. If that plague should, unhappily, extend itself into the country, then indeed it will require all the energies which can possibly be displayed by the Government of India to cope with it. With regard to the statistics promised by the noble lord, I do hope that in a crisis of this kind the not too numerous civil servants of the Government in India will not be vexed by being obliged to spend their time in making too elaborate returns. (Hear, hear.) Perhaps one of the greatest curses of the administration of India is the enormous amount of paper work now imposed upon the servants of the Government—(hear, hear)—and in a visitation of this kind, when every man will be employed to his utmost capacity and energy in connection with the relief works, I hope they may be allowed to pursue the more urgent work of looking after the distress and not be required to furnish too elaborate statistics of what is going on until after the calamity has been overcome. (Cheers.)

The EARL OF ONSLOW: That has not been lost sight of by the Secretary of State. All that has been asked for is a rough calculation; and returns such as can be prepared from the local registers of deaths will suffice for the purpose, provided the information is prompt and is telegraphed.

The EARL OF KIMBERLEY: I do not make the least complaint, but what I meant to deprecate was the pressure upon the Government which may come hereafter for more and more information. (Hear, hear.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THE "WARREN HASTINGS."

Mr. VICARY GIBBS asked the Under-Secretary of State for War what was the cause of the disaster to the *Warren Hastings* on or about the 13th January, when carrying troops to the Mauritius; and whether compensation would be paid to the regiment, or to individual members of it, for loss of property.

Mr. BRODRICK: It is not yet known what was the cause of the wreck of the *Warren Hastings*. A full enquiry will no doubt take place. The allowance regulations provide for compensation within certain limits to all officers and men losing property under such circumstances, and any claims submitted to the War Office will be duly considered.

February 2nd.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

East India (Opium)—Return presented, showing for the last ten years the acreage under poppy in India; the amount of advances to the cultivators for crude opium; and the quantity of opium produced in the factories, distinguishing between the Behar and Benares agencies:

Also the quantity exported to China and other countries; the quantity of Malwa and other opium purchased by the Indian Government; and the quantity which in any other way came under the cognizance of the Indian Government. (Address, Thursday, 28th January; Mr. H. J. Wilson); to lie upon the table.

THE CHITRAL MEDAL.

Mr. BROOKFIELD asked the Under-Secretary of State for War whether he was aware that considerable disappointment prevailed at the delay in issuing a medal for the Chitral campaign:

Whether he could explain the cause of this delay:

And, whether the Secretary of State for War would make some representation in the proper quarter with a view to hastening the issue of this medal.

Lord GEORGE HAMILTON: I greatly regret any disappointment caused by the delay in issuing the Chitral medal. The delay is practically due to a proposal from the Government of India that, in the place of a clasp being added to the existing frontier medal, an altogether new medal should be struck and issued to note the services of this very successful expedition. This involved the selection and execution of a design—a necessarily lengthy process. The dies were sent to India on the 1st of January, and I presume the medals are now being struck.

THE TROOPS AT SUAKIN.

Sir CHARLES DILKE asked the Secretary of State for India if there was any truth in the rumour of scurvy having been prevalent among the Indian troops at Suakin and Tokar last year.

Lord GEO. HAMILTON: The Indian troops at Suakin were attacked for a short time by a sudden outbreak of scurvy during which two British officers, 103 men, and 85 followers

were admitted to hospital suffering from this complaint. In about a month—viz., by the beginning of November—it was completely eradicated, and the General-Officer-Commanding was able to report that "by the middle of November, so far as the men were concerned, the force was as fit to take the field as it was on its arrival in the country."

CADETSHIPS IN THE INDIAN ARMY.

Sir SEYMOUR KING asked the Under Secretary of State for War whether he had received a sworn declaration made by Colonel A. C. Turner, Colonel C. H. Spragge, Colonel J. F. Brough, and Colonel A. N. Pearse, all of the Royal Artillery, with reference to the circumstances under which sixteen successful candidates who had competed for cadetships in Addiscombe College, in December, 1859, with a view of obtaining commissions in the Indian Artillery and Engineers, were in December, 1860, induced to accept commissions in Her Majesty's Royal Artillery or Engineers, the Government having, while these cadets were pursuing their course for the Indian Army at Addiscombe, decided not to make any more appointments to the Indian Artillery and Engineers; whether these officers had passed the examination prescribed by the regulations for the admission of candidates for cadetships in the Engineers and Artillery of Her Majesty's Indian forces, under the 34th clause of the Act of 21 and 22 Vic., cap. 106, and been sworn in as Indian cadets, and on their part had duly fulfilled the terms and conditions of the regulations; whether his attention had been particularly drawn to the statement in the declaration that early in December, 1860, the sixteen cadets, of whom these officers were the survivors, were asked by Sir Frederick Abbott, the Governor of Addiscombe, if, as no more appointments were to be made for India, they would accept commissions in Her Majesty's Royal Artillery or Engineers, and were assured that the privileges that would have belonged to them if appointed would be guaranteed: that £100 each was subsequently paid them towards their expenses at Addiscombe by the Indian Government, in accordance with one of the conditions under which they had received their cadetships; also that, on joining at Woolwich at Addiscombe early in 1861, ten of the candidates, including the declarants, who obtained commissions in Her Majesty's Royal Artillery, were assured by Colonel G. Kennedy, then in command of the depôt, that if they would consent to volunteer for general service their privileges under the conditions in the regulations for admission to cadetships at Addiscombe would be preserved to them; would he explain why, in spite of these declarations, they had been retired on pension at English instead of Indian rates, and had been deprived of the benefit which would have accrued to them, had they been appointed to the Indian Army, of counting the year they spent at Addiscombe towards pension; and whether as these cadets were induced to continue their course and accept appointments in Her Majesty's Artillery by assurances officially given to them by two superior officers representing the Crown, the Government now intended to repudiate these assurances.

Mr. BRODRICK: I can add very little to the replies made to my hon. friend in 1895 by the right hon. gentleman the member for the Stirling District. The salient point in this case is, that these officers never were in the Indian Army, appointments to which had ceased before they came out of Addiscombe. Whatever hopes, if any, were held out by the Governor of that college, were certainly unauthorised; and they were set aside in advance by the Indian General Order of the 9th December, 1859, intimating that "all future appointments of cadets should be made subject to any alteration that may be decided upon."

February 4th.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THE TROOPS AT SUAKIN.

Mr. BUCHANAN asked the Secretary of State for India, what had been the amount expended from the revenues of India on the Indian troops sent to Suakin.

Lord GEORGE HAMILTON: The expedition of Indian troops to Suakin did not throw any charge upon Indian revenues, but it did not relieve Indian revenues of the ordinary pay and allowance of the troops so sent.

The ordinary pay and allowances for six months of the troops despatched is estimated to be about £40,000 for the period during which they were stationed at Suakin, but we have not received the full accounts.

The extraordinary expenditure defrayed from the Treasury Chest of the Imperial Government is about £145,000.

Mr. BUCHANAN asked if the noble lord's estimate of £5,000 had been exceeded?

Lord G. HAMILTON: I think it is very nearly accurate. I estimated about £5,000 a month, and the troops were there $7\frac{1}{2}$ months.

Mr. BUCHANAN asked the Under Secretary of State for War, whether he would state the items of charge for which the Supplementary Estimate was asked for the expenses of the Indian troops at Suakin?

Mr. POWELL-WILLIAMS: The details have not been received. The proposed Vote is based upon an estimate of the extra expense incurred by the Indian Government, and is framed by it.

February 5th.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THE TROOPS AT SUAKIN.
PETITION AGAINST THE CHARGES.

Expenses of Indian Troops in Africa—Petition from Pandharpur, against imposition on the revenues of India; to lie upon the Table.

BRITISH INDIANS IN SOUTH AFRICA.
ORGANISED PERSECUTION AND MOB-LAW.

Sir W. WEDDERBURN asked the Secretary of State for the Colonies whether he would state the circumstances under which prolonged quarantine was imposed at Durban on the steamships "Courland" and "Naderi," which recently arrived from Bombay with clean bills of health; whether he was aware that the agents of the steamers protested against such quarantine as illegal; that a riotous demonstration took place to induce certain passengers to return to India, and that these passengers when landing were attacked and threatened with lynching; and whether he would state what steps had been taken to prevent the recurrence of such incidents?

Mr. J. CHAMBERLAIN: The "Courland" and "Naderi" having arrived at Durban from Bombay, a port infected with plague, were placed in quarantine, and I have no reason to believe that there was any irregularity in the manner in which the quarantine law was enforced. I am not aware whether the ship's agent protested against the quarantine. Upon the arrival of these ships considerable excitement existed at Durban, and meetings were held to protest against the passengers by these ships being allowed to land and to organise a demonstration to prevent their landing. On the day when the ships came into harbour about 5,000 persons assembled and threatened to forcibly prevent the landing, but the authorities induced them to disperse and the landing took place without opposition, except in the case of one person, who was assaulted but not seriously hurt. This incident did not take place at the ordinary landing-place. I have no reason to doubt that the Natal Government will take all possible precautions to prevent any violation of the law should any other ships arrive from Bombay.

Sir W. WEDDERBURN asked the right hon. gentleman whether he could assure the House that there was no reason to think that the responsible authorities of Natal had in any way countenanced the popular movement against the Indian immigrants, and that they would make it clear that the Indian immigrants were entitled to protection like any others of her Majesty's subjects?

Mr. J. CHAMBERLAIN: I do not think that is really a proper question to put. The hon. member is catechising me with regard to the intentions and motives of the Government of a self-governing colony. I have no doubt the Natal Government will do all it ought to do; at the same time, I am not responsible for them. ("Hear, hear.")

QUARANTINE ORDERS.

Sir Walter Foster asked the Secretary of State for the Colonies whether his attention had been called to two telegrams, (1) from Gibraltar to the effect that vessels from India would not get pratique there, and would not be allowed to land passengers or goods. Mails and specie would be landed in quarantine, and coals and provisions supplied in quarantine; and (2) from Malta that from 6th February inclusive, vessels from India, having no cases of plague or suspected cases of plague on board, would communicate with Commino Island, where passengers could be landed to undergo 21 days quarantine, their clothes and linen being disinfected. Such vessels would coal at Comingott's Islet; and, whether he would communicate with these Crown Colonies with a view to the adoption of more scientific and more convenient measures for the protection of public health, and also with the view to prevent an example being set by the Crown Colonies to Foreign Governments, calculated to encourage the imposition of restrictions on British commerce?

Mr. J. Chamberlain: My attention has been called to the quarantine orders in Gibraltar and Malta referred to in the Question. The Governor of Gibraltar informs me that the stringent regulation adopted there is necessary to prevent quarantine being enforced by Spain against Gibraltar, which would put a stop to the Admiralty work on the harbour. As regards Malta I may refer the hon. member to my answer to his Question on January 26th. I am glad to say that the Colonial Government have to some extent relaxed the stringency of the measures at first adopted, and I trust that, although they are placed in a position of some difficulty by the very strong feeling of the inhabitants of all classes in favour of the antiquated system of strict quarantine, they may be induced by degrees to adopt more enlightened methods of protecting the public health.

THE FAMINE IN INDIA.
ARE THERE ANY DEATHS?
RETICENCE OF THE INDIA OFFICE.

Sir W. Wedderburn asked the Secretary of State for India whether he would state the number of deaths from famine officially recorded during the last great famine; whether he would explain according to what test a death was then recorded as caused by famine, judged by the same test, had been reported to him during the present famine; and whether he would each week lay upon the table of the House a statement showing the number of such deaths, if any, in each province?

Lord George Hamilton: The estimated abnormal mortality and loss of population (including decrease of births) caused by the famine in 1877-78 was calculated by the Famine Commission to be about 5,850,000. I need not remind the House that any estimate of this kind must necessarily be regarded as approximate only. This particular estimate was arrived at partly by test censuses in typical areas, and partly by a comparion of the number of births and deaths which occurred in given areas during the famine with the normal number of births and deaths for the same areas and for similar periods. The Government of India have been asked to furnish periodical reports of any abnormal mortality which may occur in any part of the present famine area. These reports will be included in the further papers which I propose to lay on the table, at intervals of six weeks so long as the famine lasts. I am afraid that it is impossible for me to undertake more than this.

INDIAN TROOPS AT SUAKIN.
ARMY SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE, 1896-7.

On the Vote of £145,000, Pay, etc., of Indian Troops at Suakin,

Mr. Lough asked whether this vote covered the whole cost of the troops? He thought that the Indian Government ought not to be put to any expense at the present time.

Mr. T. R. Buchanan said that there were points on which information was desirable. In the past there had constantly been difficulties in settling the accounts as between India and the Home Government. Sometimes the Indian Government had had to wait months and years, and in connection with the Abyssinian campaign the money due from the Imperial Exchequer had to be borrowed. Did this sum of £145,000 represent the general Estimate of the Indian Government? What were the details of the amount, and was it a final discharge, leaving no claims in dispute?

Mr. J. Powell-Williams said that yesterday he had informed the hon. gentleman that the estimate of the total extra cost falling upon India through the use of the troops at Suakin had been framed in India, and, in the opinion of the Indian Government, covered every charge. Since yesterday he had received further information. The estimate was divided into seven heads, each of which had been computed by the Indian Government. The heaviest item was £59,000 for the transport of the troops from India and back. There was also £25,000 for land transit, £35,000 for commissariat, and the balance was made up of such items as pay, medical service and ordnance. Her Majesty's Government had every assurance that the total sum would cover every expense to which the Indian Government had been put.

Mr. Labouchere said that there were many members who, like himself, desired to divide against this vote as a protest against the employment of Indian troops at all outside India, and more especially in the Sudan, but they were unable to do so, because, if the Vote were rejected, the cost would be thrown on the people of India. (Hear, hear.) As a matter of fact, however, a considerable burden would have to be borne by India, owing to this expedition. It seemed to him a monstrous thing at a time like the present, when the people of India were struggling with famine for their lives, to tax them in order to carry out a ridiculous, absurd, and iniquitous policy of jingoism in Africa. (Cheers.) He also thought the Committee should be informed what services the Indian troops had done while at Suakin, and whether India or anybody else had benefitted to the extent not of £140,000, but of 140,000 pence, by this sending of Indian troops, despite the protest of the Indian Government, to occupy Suakin. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. Dillon said that when this question was discussed last year, public opinion was overwhelmingly in favour of the Imperial Government providing the pay of the Indian troops while away from India. He therefore thought that as India was suffering from a terrible famine, the Government ought to depart from the selfish and utterly indefensible principle of refusing to pay the wages of the Indian troops they had brought to Suakin. He regretted the forms of the House did not allow him to move an increase of the vote by £40,000, or whatever might be the amount of the pay of the troops; and he thought the Government would do well to put down an estimate for refunding the money to India as a contribution to the famine fund.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer said he appreciated the spirit of the remarks of the hon. member for East Mayo; but they were open to the grave objection that they mixed up two questions that ought to be kept apart. If help from us was required by India, because of the terrific famine, the aid that would be given would be very much larger than £30,000. (Hear, hear.) On the other hand, to remit this charge upon India would be to neglect a very important fiscal question of policy between the two countries in regard to the employment of Indian troops in similar cases in the future. (Hear, hear.) While, therefore, he had every desire to consider any application for aid from India—should it be made—he trusted that the suggestion which had been made would not be proceeded with on that occasion.

February 8th.

HOUSE OF LORDS.

THE FAMINE IN INDIA.
CONDITION OF THE AFFECTED PROVINCES.
OFFICIAL RETICENCE AS TO MORTALITY.

Lord Kinnaird asked the following questions, of which he had given private notice to the Government: Whether her Majesty's Government were in a position to affirm or contradict the statement telegraphed on the 2nd inst by Reuter's agent from Raiput in the Central Provinces, that many deaths from starvation had already taken place, that many persons were on the brink of starvation, and that the district, with a population

of one and a-half millions, was almost without food supplies. In the worst districts of each of the affected provinces, what was now the selling price of grain in common use, (*a*) in the towns, (*b*) in the remote interior? What did her Majesty's Government consider to be the retail selling price of such grain which could not be passed without the speedy exhaustion of the cultivating and artisan classes, by which is meant classes above the unskilled wage-earning labourer? He said that the statement of the Secretary of State in another place on Friday last reminded the country of an awful possibility. If the loss of life was estimated at 5,800,000 in 1877-8, out of a population of 27,000,000, what was the possibility of this famine, affecting an area with a population of 40,000,000? If the same ratio of lives were lost the number would reach the appalling total of over eight millions. He had carefully read over the Government's answer to the questions he addressed to them last Monday, and he considered they wholly failed to answer the facts and figures which he ventured to put forward, as he believed, making out a case that the time had arrived when they must on a large scale store grain, and, if necessary, import it from Burma and elsewhere. They were not working in the dark, without precedent to guide them. Of the principal famines of this century only one was successfully grappled with, and that was by Lord Northbrook and Sir Richard Temple, and the other officers working under them, and they were only able to avert horrible destruction of human life by a large importation of grain. The crux of the whole matter was, would private trade do what was necessary? Would it supply grain to even get-at-able districts at a possible price? This necessary help must, as the Lieut.-Governor of Bengal had said, come by grain imported from across the sea. The optimistic prophecies and promises of the Government that they would prevent loss of life had already been falsified. He believed it was now admitted that the situation in the Central Provinces was serious. Reuter's Agency telegraphed the serious news that an area of 12,000 miles and a population of 1,500,000 was almost without food supply. In a week or two they would hear whether a sufficient stock of grain would be brought in by private traders. He was introduced to a gentleman that day who had been 38 years in India, 32 of which were spent in the Government service. He left Bombay on December 14, and he admitted that planters, merchants, importers, and others who knew the country well, estimated that up to November 14, there had been 250,000 deaths from starvation. In the Central Provinces there was another burning question, the supply of seed grain, which neither landlords nor tenants were able to get. Did the Government intend to provide seed for the next harvest under the Famine Code? Papers dated January 13 from Calcutta gave an account of a meeting of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce. The Committee of that body said:—"Having regard to the widespread effect of the present scarcity, the committee had been impressed by the high range of prices throughout the Province of Bengal. Even in places where the crop has not wholly failed, prices of food stuffs are far in excess of anything marking the beginning of scarcity in 1874 or in 1866. This high range of wholesale prices means a very considerably higher retail price to the people, so that the effect of the demand for food in the afflicted tracts, and in the tracts where the crops have notoriously failed, has led the committee to infer that stocks throughout the country are low." The British Indian Association, which always spoke with authority, had also expressed dissatisfaction that steps had not been taken to secure an adequate store of grain which could be utilised at short notice. This, they believed, could only be done by the Government, so that, in the event of a crisis, it might be used in outlying districts. With reference to questions 2 and 3, he ventured to think an assurance was required from the Government that, whenever the rate rose to 18 lb. per rupee, direct orders should be given that imported grain would be brought into the district; for it was an established fact in famine history, that it was impossible for the rate to be 18 lb. per rupee of grain in common use for long without the death of millions, as in Orissa and Southern Indian. Private trade was sure to be busy about and in seaports and the main lines of railway, and might possibly do all that was wanted there. It did so in Behar, sending into the distressed parts 50,000 tons a month. This fact showed how futile all the assertions were that the Government by their importing so largely—altogether about 500,000 tons—crushed out of activity private trade. It imported again in Southern India, when it threw into the distressed parts of Madras and Bombay 100,000 tons a month; but the grain never got into the remote parts. The prices prevailing along the line of rail were high enough to enable traders to make a profit, and all they could bring was greedily absorbed on the main line. They had no mind to face the difficulties and risks of the further journey into the remote parts. This was no conjecture, for he had seen private letters from the Central Provinces which arrived last week, speaking of terrible scenes and deaths from starvation. He had received a letter speaking of a district some miles from a town or railway, in which the distress was very acute throughout the villages. At present there were no relief works, and no possibility of getting Government assistance. The action of the Government in discouraging private charity had made it difficult to collect funds, and the Mansion House Fund was entirely in the hands of the Government. The difficulty was that the Government either had no information or thought it well to follow the advice of the Leader of the Opposition, that the Indian Government should have a free hand and not be interfered with or troubled with questions. He was not making any complaints of the self-denying hard work of many officials. He only hoped that many would not give way under the strain, as one noble worker had done—a Deputy Commissioner who died of brain fever from the strain put on him by the famine, constantly saying, "These people are dying and I cannot save them." What the country would require of the Government was, not assurances and promises, but facts justifying the statements put forward, that the Government of India was never in so favourable a position for combating famine. Many high authorities took the opposite view, for prices had been for some years at an exhausting figure, and now the scarcity and increased dearness were more widespread than ever had been the case before. Stocks were not coming forward as expected, and the landlords and people with wealth were clinging to their supplies.

The EARL OF ONSLOW: The noble lord has not confined himself to asking questions, but has given your lordships a certain amount of information, and has passed some criticism on the action of the Viceroy and his Government, and perhaps your lordships will forgive me if, before I address myself to answering the questions of the noble lord, I deal for a moment with what he has said. In the first place, I am not aware that the Government of Lord Elgin has at any time made any promise or statement that the Government would be able to prevent entirely loss of life. I think the statement made was that the Government had recognised that it should be in such a position that no persons, need of necessity lose their lives; and I would point out that there is a considerable difference between the two propositions. The noble lord has said that he has been informed that in one particular district there have been 250,000 deaths from famine. I am not in a position to contradict the assertion made by the noble lord, but I can say this—that if it should hereafter prove to be corroborated and shown to be correct, I should be very much surprised, because it is quite in opposition to all the information we have received; and when the noble lord asks me whether Her Majesty's Government can affirm or contradict what has been reported by Reuter's agent at Raipur, I can only assure him that it is quite contrary to the information we have received. I am not myself in a position to say what the number of deaths at Raipur may have been, but the Secretary of State has communicated with the Government of India by telegraph, and I shall be glad to hand to my noble friend a copy of the reply as soon as it is received. The noble lord has asked me a number of other questions, some of which it is not easy to answer in a general way. The noble lord asks me what Her Majesty's Government consider to be the retail selling price of grain which cannot be passed without the speedy exhaustion of the cultivator and artisan classes, by which is meant classes above the unskilled wage-earning labourer. If the noble lord will refer to the Report of the Famine Commissioners he will see that the actual price of grain in a particular district is not really controlled by the necessities of the population but by the power of the population to purchase. The Commissioners say that it is a well-ascertained fact that prices which will be regarded as indicating a state of famine in one part of the country are quite compatible with a state of undisturbed prosperity in another. As to what are the prices now obtaining in different parts of India, I can only answer that by referring to the prices in the particular district to which the noble lord has

referred. On December 31, 1896, rice and wheat were obtainable in Raipur at the rate of 10 seers per rupee, while on the same date in 1895, before famine prices existed, rice was obtainable at the rate of 16 seers per rupee, and wheat at the rate of 16½ seers per rupee; so that the noble lord will see that the price has risen from 16 seers to the rupee to 10. Before I sit down I should like to read part of a telegram received from the Viceroy to-day, which, I think, will go a long way to allay the apprehensions of the noble lord as to the supplies being insufficient for the wants of India to day. The Viceroy says: "Our latest information is generally reassuring. Steady prices generally, and fall which has now begun in Punjab and N.-W. Provinces, and sufficiency of visible supplies for daily requirements, are favourable indications. Punjab prices reported 15 to 20 per cent. lower than two months ago. Apprehension of failure of stocks would be indicated by rise of prices. Spring crops promise well in Northern India and Hindustan, and ought to add considerably to existing stocks. Sufficiency of existing stocks for all probable emergencies not capable of precise quantitative answer, but no reason to doubt correctness of policy affirmed in your despatch No. 10 of June 15, that trade as a whole can supply food demand better and more effectively than Government." I think that in that answer I shall have given the noble lord some assurance that the Government of India are satisfied that the policy they have adopted, and intend to carry out, is one which will meet the necessities of the situation.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

PETITIONS.

Misra, W. S.,—Petition of W. S. Misra, for redress of grievances; to lie upon the Table.

Mustafabad Jehsil Station,—Petition from Mustafabad, against removal; to lie upon the Table.

THE FAMINE IN INDIA.
THE DEATH-RATE IN THE CENTRAL PROVINCES.

Mr. Davitt asked the Secretary of State for India whether he would state from the statistics of the *Local Government Gazette* of the Central Provinces of India, the death rate in those provinces for the six months of the year ending 31st December, 1895, and for the year ending 31st December, 1896, and the total number of deaths in each of these two periods, giving each number separately?

Lord George Hamilton: The *Central Provinces Gazette* does not give the full monthly vital statistics for any month later than September, 1896, but the figures for the periods of three months ending September, 1895, and September, 1896, respectively are as follows:—Mean of monthly death rates, July to September, 1895, 43·12 per mille: mean of monthly death rates July to September, 1896, 55·80 per mille; total number of deaths, July to September, 1895, 102,420; total number of deaths, July to September, 1896, 132,552. These provinces were visited by a severe epidemic of cholera in the spring and summer which caused a heavy and general rise in the number of deaths in the summer and early autumn. Though I have no complete summary of the death rate of the whole province for the later months, the Chief Commissioner informed me some time back that in the division of Jabalpur, where the distress was acute, there was a continuous fall in the mortality during October and November.

February 9th.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THE INDIAN STAFF CORPS.

Sir Seymour King asked the Secretary of State for India whether he had been informed that more than two hundred memorials from officers of the Indian Staff Corps had been forwarded in the regular way to the Commander-in-Chief in India, praying for a re-opening and re-consideration of the question of supersession of Staff Corps officers by juniors in the British Army in India; whether the Commander-in-Chief had forwarded their memorials to the Government of India; and whether the Viceregal authorities had made any representations on the subject to the Secretary of State.

Lord G. Hamilton: I have no information as to the submission of any memorials by officers of the Indian Staff Corps regarding their supersession by officers of the British Army in India, nor have I received any representation on the subject from the Government of India.

INDIAN WOOLLEN IMPORTS.

Mr. Godson asked the First Lord of the Treasury whether her Majesty's Government was aware that woollen manufactured articles were being imported into this country from the plague-stricken districts of India; and whether, locking to the general consensus of opinion that the great plague of London derived its origin from woollen manufactures brought into this country from infected countries in Asia Minor and the East, her Majesty's Government would take immediate steps to compel all wools and woollen manufactures coming from India to be thoroughly disinfected before they were allowed to be landed.

Mr. Balfour: In answer to my hon. friend, all I have to state is that my noble friend, the Secretary of State for India, is in communication with the Indian Government on this subject, and the Indian Government are thoroughly alive to the responsibility which rests upon them. I am sure that every precaution will be taken, and I trust that nothing will be either said or done in this country which may unnecessarily hamper the course of trade.

THE FAMINE IN INDIA.
UNCOINED SILVER.

Mr. Bhownaggree asked the Secretary of State for India whether the estimate which had been published of 1,312,500,000 ounces, as the silver savings of the inhabitants of India, was approximately correct:

Whether he was aware that in former famines such savings were usually exchangeable into rupees weight for weight, but now they had been depreciated about 700,000,000 rupees, or equal to £44,000,000 sterling, owing to the mints being no longer open for the coinage of silver, apart from any further deduction by the Native dealers to cover their risk of the market:

And, whether the Government had any scheme in view to remedy the loss to the people in their distress.

Lord George Hamilton: I cannot undertake to give any opinion as to the value of the estimate to which the hon. member refers, or as to the total amount of the depreciation, in relation to rupees, of the uncoined silver held by natives of India. But, as I have already pointed out in reply to a question in this House, although there is now a greater divergence than formerly between the gold value of coined and uncoined silver in India, it does not follow that the purchasing power of silver bullion in that country has fallen.

The Government of India are sparing neither effort nor expenditure to assist the people in their distress, but such assistance will not be based upon the considerations mentioned in the hon. member's question.

INDIAN MUTINY VETERANS.

Sir John Leng asked the Under Secretary of State for War what number of compassionate pensions had been granted during the last three years to men who served in the Crimean and Indian Mutiny campaigns; how many men in receipt of such pensions had died during the same period; and what changes, if any, had been made during the last twelve months in the regulations under which these compassionate pensions were granted?

Mr. Powell-Williams: During the last three years 1,539 special campaign pensions have been granted, and 279 have lapsed by death. The conditions of grant have been altered during the last year, by including in the minimum of qualifying service a portion of that given under age and of that forfeited.

February 11th.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

EXCHANGE COMPENSATION ALLOWANCE.

Sir William Wedderburn asked the Secretary of State for India whether he would enquire from the Government of India

why no reply had been sent to a memorial, dated 29th November, 1895, from Mr. E. R. Jardine, Deputy Postmaster of Bombay, regarding his claim to exchange compensation:

And, whether he was aware that Mr. Jardine, on the ground of his English domicile, drew compensation up to 30th November, 1894; that the compensation was then stopped without any reason being assigned; that Mr. Jardine's father possessed an English domicile, as holding her Majesty's commission; and that his brother, M. A. J. A. Jardine, District Police Superintendent in Burma, and Mr. W. F. Jardine, Assistant Collector of Salt in Bombay, whose status was exactly the same as his, were allowed, without objection, to draw their compensation allowance.

Lord G. HAMILTON: The subject of the grant of exchange compensation is, as stated by me on the 26th January, now under the consideration of the Secretary of State in Council. Until the Government of India receives his decision, which I hope will be communicated very soon, on the many points that have been raised, they are not in a position to reply to individual memorials.

THE DESAI OF JALIHAL.

Sir WILLIAM WEDDERBURN asked the Secretary of State for India whether the additional evidence adduced in the appeal of the Desai of Jalihal, in the Bombay Presidency, including as it did the original title-deeds and accounts of the Peishwa, had induced the Government to alter their original decision of resuming the estate:

And whether he would lay all the papers upon the table of the House.

Lord G. HAMILTON: The Government of Bombay, having considered the evidence to which the honourable member refers, reported to me that they saw no reason why the previous decisions should be reversed. In this opinion, after considering the memorial which they forwarded, I concurred. If the honourable member wishes to move for the papers, I shall not oppose the motion.

AGRICULTURAL BANKS.

Sir WILLIAM WEDDERBURN asked the Secretary of State for India whether he was aware that in the year 1884 the Viceroy in Council submitted to the India Office a proposal for the establishment of an agricultural bank near Poona, as an effective means of relieving the heavily indebted rayats, which proposal received the hearty support of both rayats and money-lenders; that the Bombay Government was willing to conduct the experiment; that the Manchester Chamber of Commerce memorialised the Secretary of State in its favour; but that the Secretary of State, after long delay, ultimately withheld his sanction:

And, whether he would state for what reasons and upon what expert advice he refused to permit an experiment, unanimously recommended by the Government of India, as being advocated on purely disinterested grounds, and as likely to be of incalculable benefit to the whole country.

Lord GEORGE HAMILTON: I am aware of the discussions to which the question draws attention. The reasons which induced the then Secretary of State to withhold sanction from the scheme to which the honourable member refers are stated at length at pages 55-58 of papers presented to Parliament on the subject in 1887.

When the Poona scheme was negatived, the Government of India were invited to bring forward a revised scheme that would not be open to the same objection. A valuable report on agricultural banks of the world, with suggestions for action in India, has recently been prepared by an officer of the Madras Government. I am in hopes that a practical scheme for making a beginning with such banks may before long be brought forward. The question how best to mitigate and prevent the indebtedness of the Indian peasantry is one of the most important that the governments in India could, in ordinary times possibly consider.

DEATHS FROM FAMINE.
DELAY OF OFFICIAL FIGURES.

Sir WILLIAM WEDDERBURN asked the Secretary of State for India whether he would request the Viceroy, in his usual weekly telegram stating the number of persons on relief, also to include the number of deaths due to the famine in each of the affected districts:

And, whether he had ascertained by telegraph the number of deaths due to famine in the Central Provinces.

Lord G. HAMILTON: As I informed the hon. member on the 5th instant, it is not possible to associate with the telegrams describing the weekly progress of relief operations and the numbers receiving relief any statistics relating to mortality for the same period. An interval of time must elapse between the period to which vital statistics in India refer and their receipt in this country. In a despatch (see page 176 of the Blue-book on Famine) I anticipated the hon. member's request by asking for "the earliest possible information of any considerable rise of the death-rate above normal, and also a periodical report of continued mortality of an unusually high rate in any province." I have also requested the Government of India to let me know the total number of deaths from all causes in the Central Provinces in 1896, as soon as the statistics are available.

THE INDIAN MAIL SERVICE.

Sir JOHN LENG asked the Secretary to the Treasury, as representing the Postmaster-General, whether the contract for the conveyance of the mails to India, China, and Australia had now been arranged; and, if so, what rates of speed had been fixed, and what saving in time could be effected to Bombay, Hong Kong, and Melbourne?

Mr. R. W. HANBURY: The tenders which have been accepted contemplate a speed of $14\frac{1}{2}$ knots on the line to and from India, $13\frac{3}{4}$ knots on the line to and from China, and 14 knots on the line to and from Australia. The time-table has not yet been settled, but it is anticipated that under the new contract, as compared with the old, the following will be the approximate saving in the time of transit of the mails from London: to Bombay, nearly two days; to Hong Kong, four days; to Melbourne, four days.

February 12th.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

East India (Statement of Trade)—Copy presented—of Tables relating to the Trade of British India with British Possessions and Foreign Countries for the five years 1891-2 to 1895-6 [by Command]; to lie upon the Table.

February 13th.

HOUSE OF LORDS.

THE PLAGUE IN INDIA.
EPERIMENTS IN INOCULATION.

Lord REAY asked the Under Secretary of State for India whether any recent information had been obtained from the Bombay Government with reference to protective inoculation against bubonic fever; and whether any retired members of the Indian Civil Service were to be temporarily employed in India. He stated that he had followed with some anxiety the development of affairs in the Bombay Presidency, with the Government of which he had himself been so recently connected. He had watched with pleasure the admirable way in which Lord Sandhurst, by personal exertion and in other ways, had dealt with the two-fold calamity which had befallen the Presidency. On January 18 Professor Haffkine, who had been employed on bacteriological research in Bombay, announced that he had found a prophylactic lymph of vaccine, with which he made, first of all, an experiment on himself, and which he believed had since been made on others. Since then Lord Lister, on January 20th, at Belfast, called attention to the importance of the anti-toxin serum which had been discovered by Dr. Yersin in the Pasteur Institute. After Lord Lister made his speech on January 20th, M. Roux, a a man of European reputation in this matter and one of the most eminent disciples of Pasteur, and well known through his research with reference to diphtheric serum in the Academy

of Medicine in Paris, gave some most interesting details with reference to the discovery of Dr. Yersin. In 1894 Dr. Yersin was sent by the French Minister for the Colonies to Hong Kong, where this disease prevailed at the time, and he there found, along with a Japanese gentleman, the microbe. Further experiments were thereupon made at the Pasteur Institute, which led to the discovery of the serum, which like the diphtheric serum, was taken from the horse. This serum was not only a prophylactic, but it also had curative properties. Experiments had been made on animals, from which it was clear that its protective properties were probably greater than the curative results which were obtained by it. The next step taken by the French Government was to establish a Pasteur Institute at Nha-trang, in Anam. When the disease broke out again at Hong Kong in January 1896, the Institute was not yet sufficiently advanced to prepare the serum; but on June 10th, Dr. Yersin proceeded to Hong Kong with a few bottles of it, to which were added eighty bottles sent from the Paris Institute. The disease was then dying out at Hong Kong. Dr. Yersin then left for Canton, and there the first experiment was made with the serum. A startling result was obtained. A young Chinese, aged 18, who was inoculated on the 26th had recovered the next day at six o'clock. Dr. Yersin went on to Amoy on July 1st, but he left behind him other cases for treatment, and they also were attended with complete recovery. At Amoy Dr. Yersin treated twenty-three patients. In the course of ten days only two died out of the twenty-three patients, and those two fatal cases were partly due to the fact that the patients were not treated in the first stages of the disease; but two others, who had been ill for five days, recovered. Taking the three patients at Canton and the twenty-five at Amoy, with two deaths on the twenty-eight cases treated, a mortality was obtained of 7·6 per cent., instead of 80 per cent., which was the normal death-rate of the disease fixed by M. Roux. Those facts were certainly worthy of consideration, and he hoped that no effort would be spared to obtain the serum, either from the Pasteur Institute or from Nha-trang. He saw that the matter had not escaped the notice of the Bombay Government, because in a letter from the municipal commissioner to the standing committee of the municipality a hope was expressed that he would be in possession of the serum this month—or rather that Dr. Yersin would be able to forward it this month. Perhaps the noble lord could give some information. With regard to the same question, any one who knew the zeal and the devotion to duty of the Indian Civil Service would agree that there was very considerable risk that they might overwork themselves, and, at all events, in certain districts where there was great pressure by reason of the relief works it might be very desirable to give some additional strength to the establishments. Among retired Indian officials, there were those who had declared themselves ready at any time to go and assist their brethren in India, and he trusted that no hesitation would be felt by the Government on this side, if an appeal came from India, to mobilise those reserve forces which certainly under the exceptional circumstances which now prevailed might be used effectually and without in any way dislocating existing arrangements.

The EARL of ONSLOW, in reply, said the experiments referred to had not escaped the attention of the Government in Bombay, and M. Yersin had been commissioned by that Government to procure serum for use in Bombay, and he was expected to return to the city about the end of the month or the beginning of next provided with a sufficient quantity of it. The prophylactic vaccine which Professor Haffkine had discovered, although it had not yet been tried for the curative properties of the serum, was likely to prove extremely valuable also. He learnt that on January 2nd Professor Haffkine wrote that 21 animals had been immunised and that he was looking forward to making trial of the new process. He also asked that 49 horses should be purchased to provide a further supply of serum—a request which the municipal commissioner at once took steps to carry out. With reference to the experiments conducted up to the present time the India Office were informed that 512 inoculations in all had taken place, and that no attacks were reported except two in the gaol, and, speaking generally, the Government of Bombay considered the inoculation appeared to afford considerable protection, but sufficient time had not yet elapsed to estimate the degree of protection or how long it would continue. With regard to the second Question no retired Indian Civil servants had as yet been sent out to India, but the India Office would be prepared to receive the names of any who were willing to volunteer for this service. It did not rest with the India Office to determine whether or not they should be sent out, but their names should be telegraphed to the Viceroy, and if in the exercise of his discretion he thought their services could be made available no doubt he would act accordingly. The energy and activity which had been exhibited by Lord Sandhurst and the members of the Government of Bombay in combating both the plague and the famine were warmly appreciated by Her Majesty's Government. (Cheers.) It might interest the House to hear the contents of a telegram which had just been put into his hands and which gave the latest information concerning the progress of the plague: "Deaths from all causes in Bombay city for week ended February 12th, 1,835. Reported plague deaths, 813. Plague has been to some extent checked where first prevalent. Mandvi now almost free from disease. In Bombay city general tendency to extend north continues. House-to-house visitation active; 218 dwellings condemned as uninhabitable; 31 recommended for alterations; tiles removed from 3,141; earth floors dug up in 581 and 2,277 limewashed; 171 vacated; and 35 have been destroyed by fire during past week. Under Epidemic Diseases Act Government have empowered municipal commissioner of his own authority and without reference to the magistrate (1) to prohibit use of dwellings unfit for habitation; (2) to acquire abatement of overcrowding; (3) to require vacation of buildings and premises for cleansing and disinfecting; (4) to forcibly enter deserted buildings and cleanse and disinfect them; (5) to remove earth from floors; (6) to cut off water connections; (7) to demolish whole or part of buildings unfit for habitation; (8) to destroy clothing, &c. Arrangements have been made for emptying all out-going trains at stations outside Bombay, and for strict medical inspection of all passengers. One indigenous case occurred in Poona cantonment, where conservancy and cleansing operations had been greatly improved and every precaution taken. In Poona city increase from 43 to 47 cases during the week, but concentrated in certain quarters, and hitherto no tendency to spread observed; general cleansings, disinfecting operations active; infected houses vacated, disinfected, and opened to sun and air; segregation camp for inmates ready, but not willingly resorted to; they prefer leaving Poona. Difficulty in inducing declaration of cases and removal to hospital. In Coorla cases diminished; in Bondore, Bhiwandi, and also in rest of Thana district cases increased; in Surat district local cases reported from two villages. Possibilities of extension of plague to new localities very carefully watched and all local officers on alert. Karachi—Correct number plague deaths for week ended February 12th, 269; February 5th, 297; January 29th, 181; January 22nd, 206. Mortality chiefly concentrated poorest Muhammadan quarter, and there some difficulty was found in detecting cases. Muhammadan officials at work among them. 600 Muhammadans gone into health camp; infected huts burnt or pulled down. Hindu health camp doing well; evacuation of infected houses enforced and re-occupation not allowed. No indigenous cases in Sind outside Karachi. Extensive powers given to all district officers under Epidemic Diseases Act."

February 15th.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

East India (Warlike Operations) (Killed and Wounded),—On the motion of MR. LOUGH a "Return was granted showing the number of Sailors and Soldiers Killed or Wounded in War or Warlike Operations, carried on by the Government of India during the years 1895 and 1896, respectively, (in continuation of Parliamentary Paper, No. 154, of Session 1896.)"

THE NIZAM'S REVENUES.

MR. MONK asked the Secretary of State for India whether a loan was about to be issued in London on the security of the Nizam's revenues:

And, whether the Secretary of State's approval had been obtained; and, if it had not, whether the issue would be in contravention of an existing statute.

LORD G. HAMILTON: I have received no information from India as to the raising of such a loan, nor has my consent or that of the Government of India been asked, as required under the terms of the statute 37 Geo. III., chapter 142, section 28. I am advised that any British subject directly or indirectly concerned in raising any money by way of loan for a native State in India, without the consent of the Secretary of State in Council or of the Governor-General or one of the Governors in Council, previously had and obtained in writing, commits a misdemeanour, and the bonds and securities held or taken become null and void.

OFFICERS ON LEAVE.

MR. MACLEAN asked the Secretary of State for India, whether the Government of India had decided to place the steamers of the North German Lloyd line on the same footing as those of British companies in respect to the exemption from penalties of Officers overstaying their leave through delay in the arrival of the vessel in which they returned to India:

And, whether any North German Lloyd steamers now run on the mail lines to India.

LORD G. HAMILTON: The answer to the first part of the honourable member's question is in the affirmative. So far as I am aware the North German Lloyd steamers run to Aden and Colombo, but not to any port in India.

February 16th.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

RAILWAY EXTENSION.

East India (Extension of Railways by Private Agency),—On the motion of MR. M. M. BHOWNAGGREE a return was granted, showing the terms offered by the Government of India in their Resolutions in the Public Works Department, dated the 15th day of September 1893, the 29th day of March 1895, and the 17th day of April 1896, respectively, for the Construction of Railways in India by Private Agency, with a list of the applications for concessions for the Construction of Railways received since the issue of the first of those Resolutions.

THE MERCHANDISE MARKS ACT.

SIR HOWARD VINCENT asked the President of the Board of Trade if he could state upon what grounds the Lords of the Treasury had decided that the placing on tins imported from Germany a map of Southern India and Ceylon with the Union Jack, and below it representations of her Majesty's Indian subjects, could not be held to convey an indication to a purchaser that the tins were British made, and coming therefore within the terms of the Merchandise Marks Act:

And, if he could inform the House why such matters were referred to the Lords of the Treasury, and were not decided by her Majesty's Customs and the Board of Trade, which under the Amending Act of 1891 had to make regulations for the prosecution of offences affecting trade.

MR. HANBURY: The marks of which the hon. member complains appear to convey no indication as to the country in which the tin was made, but to be merely a part of its ornamentation. Indeed, the various types of female beauty, which have no doubt attracted the eye of my hon. and gallant friend—(laughter)—appear to indicate an origin quite distinct from this country. The answer to the second paragraph of the question is that by section 2 of the Customs Consolidation Act, 1876, the Board of Customs are, in all matters and things relating to the execution of their duties, subject to the control of the Treasury.

February 18th.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

HEALTH OF THE ARMY.

RETURN GRANTED.

On the motion of MR. JEFFREYS a Return was granted for the years 1894 and 1895, as regards the United Kingdom and foreign stations, showing separately for the United Kingdom, Bengal, Madras, Bombay, Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus, Egypt, Canada, Bermuda, West Indies, Jamaica, South Africa, Mauritius, Ceylon, Straits Settlements, and Hong Kong, the average annual strength of the troops, the admissions of soldiers to hospital, and the ratio of admissions per thousand of mean strength for primary venereal sores, secondary syphilis, and gonorrhœa, respectively, together with the total numbers constantly sick from these causes, and the ratio constantly sick from such causes per thousand of mean strength; the Return to specify any changes which have been made during the period it covers in the nomenclature of the diseases referred to, showing the general effect on the subsequent statistics in the Return, with the dates when such changes were made (in continuation of Parliamentary Paper, No. 153, of Session 1894-5).

THE ARMY IN INDIA.

DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE'S REPORT.

MAJOR RASCH asked the Secretary of State for India, if he could say when the Departmental Committee of Enquiry on the Health of the army in India would produce their report:

And, whether it would be placed in the hands of members, when printed.

LORD G. HAMILTON: It is hoped that the report will be complete in a few days. I propose, after I have had time to consider it, to make it public.

THE FAMINE IN INDIA.

OFFICIAL RETICENCE AS TO MORTALITY.

MR. ROBINSON SOUTTAR (on behalf of Sir W. Wedderburn) asked the Secretary of State for India whether, pending the receipt of the complete statistics of mortality which had been called for, he would give the House an approximate estimate (based upon the reports of the local officials) of the number of deaths, up to the present date, believed to be due to famine in the various affected districts.

SIR J. FERGUSSON asked whether the noble lord the Secretary of State for India would consider the desirability of not disturbing officers in their beneficent labours in looking after distressed people by calling upon them to prepare returns of unnecessary statistics.

LORD G. HAMILTON: As I stated in reply to a previous question by the honourable member, I shall include in the famine papers to be laid on the Table from time to time all the information received from India regarding mortality in the famine districts; and I have called for monthly mortality returns for all famine tracts in which the mortality was considerably above the normal. The second set of famine papers which I hope to lay on the Table by Monday will contain partial information on the matter. I do not think it right to present to the House conjectural estimates in anticipation of correct information or to ask the Government of India, whose time is more than filled up by urgent practical work, to transfer any portion of their attention from such work to the framing of speculative estimates of mortality.

THE ARMY IN INDIA.

GENERAL RUSSELL asked the Under Secretary of State for War, whether he had any objection to state the names of the members of the Departmental Committee which had been appointed to inquire into the health of the army in India:

And, whether he could state when it was probable that the report of the Committee would be completed.

LORD G. HAMILTON: The members of the Departmental Committee appointed to report on the health of the army in India are Lord Onslow, President; Sir James Peile, member of the Council of India; Surgeon-Major General W. Taylor, Army Medical Department; Surgeon-Colonel J. Richardson, Indian Medical Service (retired.) It is hoped that the report may be ready in a few days for consideration by the Secretary of State.

THE ARMY MEDICAL SERVICE.

MR. BUCHANAN asked the Under Secretary of State for War whether the increase of pay announced by him for the Army

Medical Service was to be paid by the Indian or by the British Exchequer.

Mr. Powell-Williams: Service in India is paid for by the Government of India. The Secretary of State for India has granted this increase of pay after full consideration, and the new regulations promulgating it will be issued by the Indian Government.

Mr. Buchanan inquired whether the proposal for this increase of pay originated with the Government of India; or, if not, whether their consent was obtained before this extra charge was laid on Indian finances.

Lord G. Hamilton: I believe in the first instance it was suggested by the War Office, then correspondence ensued and the India Office agreed to the proposal.

Mr. Buchanan: Were the Government of India consulted?

Lord G. Hamilton: Yes.

February 19th.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THE INDIAN TEA INDUSTRY.

Sir Seymour King asked the Secretary of State for India whether his attention had been called to the serious danger with which the Indian tea industry was threatened by the proposal of the Indian Government to allow pilgrims for Mecca to embark at Diamond Harbour; and what steps he proposed to take in the matter.

Lord George Hamilton replied that he was in communication with the Government of India on the subject, and he expected to hear that the pilgrimage from India had been suspended altogether for the present.

THE CHITRAL MEDAL.

During the discussion on the Army Estimates (vote of £54,800 for miscellaneous effective services),

Mr. Courtenay Warner asked when the medals for the Chitral Expedition would be issued.

Mr. Powell Williams replied that provision was made for them in the vote, and he hoped their issue would not be delayed.

Dr. Tanner: Where are they made? (Order, order.)

February 23rd.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THE FAMINE IN INDIA.
SUGGESTED GRANT IN AID.

Mr. S. Smith asked the First Lord of the Treasury whether, in view of the immense extent of the famine area in India, and the heavy drain it would entail on the finances of that country, the Government would take into consideration the expediency of making a grant in aid of India from the Exchequer of this country.

Mr. Balfour said he had nothing to add to the answer he gave to a similar question on January 21st. He would remind the hon. member that in a few weeks the Finance Minister of India would make his official statement to the House.

MORTALITY IN THE CENTRAL PROVINCES.

Mr. Bhownaggree asked the Secretary of State for India, if he had received any information regarding the mortality caused in connexion with the famine in the Central Provinces and other districts of India up to a recent date; and, if so, if he would furnish the number and other details regarding the same.

Lord G. Hamilton: I have received the following information regarding mortality in the Central Provinces:—Total deaths in 1895, 349,137; 1896, 468,469. The latter year was exceptionally unhealthy, and it appears that cholera deaths were 37,479 in excess over those in 1895; fever, 59,342; diarrhœa and dysentery, 9,566; smallpox, 1,103; other causes, 11,842. This mortality gives for the whole year a death-rate of 36·03 per 1,000 in 1895, and of 49·03 per 1,000 in 1896 on the present population.

INDIAN MAILS.

Sir J. Leng asked the Secretary to the Treasury, as representing the Postmaster-General, whether, in view of the threatened difficulties to the transit of the Indian mails through France and other European countries on account of the plague at Bombay, and the possibility of the existing mail service being interfered with, arrangements will be considered for conveying the Indian mails from Port Said direct to this country; whether he is aware that the distance by sea between Port Said and Plymouth is almost identical with that between New York and Plymouth, which has been done by mail steamers in little more than six days; and whether, in the event of serious interruption of the overland mail service, either in consequence of quarantine regulations or international complications, an expeditious sea service can be provided.

Mr. Hanbury: No objection has yet been raised to the transit of mails from India through Italy and France; and in the event of that route being interrupted hereafter, the hon. member may rest assured that every effort will be made to secure the conveyance of the mails to this country by sea as quickly as possible. His calculations as to distances are accurate, but the shortest voyage from New York to Plymouth occupied about six days and a-half, and the average length of the passages was nearer seven than six days. He is of course aware that the conditions of the passenger trade have not developed nearly so high a sea speed on the lines to and from the East as on the New York line; that on the latter there are few steamers afloat that can accomplish the voyage to New York in a little over six days, and these are not available for the Mediterranean and Eastern service.